

**The Bergen Round Table:
Coupling EFA with Higher Education
20th May 2006**

KI 13.30-14.30 The role of Norwegian Institutions in promoting EFA and Teacher Education in Africa. Panel discussion

My name is Ingunn Alver, I am President of the Hordaland county chapter of the Union of Education Norway.

Every education system depends on its teachers. Statements have been made to the fact that teachers are the most important factor for quality learning, for instance the Global Monitoring Report 2005; The Quality Imperative (UNESCO). This is corroborated by worldwide research on education.

We would like to add that

- ***the teachers' unions are the teachers' collective voice!***
- To get to know teachers and their views is to contact the teachers unions.

Unfortunately there are few traditions for such an approach.

I would like to quote Education Internationals President Thulas Nxesi from the South African Democratic Teachers Union::

“In many countries, dialogue and seeking consensus are not the fashion of the day. Rather, leaders resort to their notion of “strong leadership and skip the consultation process.....EFA can only be achieved when all stakeholders are included. Not as a favour but as a fundamental right. I call upon all donor governments to institutionalise the consultation of unions as part of criteria of Good Governance.”

Teachers are among those stakeholders and the systematic voice of the teachers are their organisations.

I thank you for the opportunity to share our views on how we as a trade union for teachers can play a role in promoting EFA, both in Norway and internationally.

The Union of Education Norway represents almost 140 000 teachers, employed in the education system from kinder garden up through University level. Approximately 95 % of the teachers in Norway are members.

As a modern union for teachers, we concentrate on two equally important focus areas: Working conditions and education policy. The focus on working conditions is rooted in human rights and the ILO convention. The other area, education policy, aims to influence and to be a supplier of terms in the development of education policy. We work to influence all areas concerning education: plans and reforms, legislation, curriculum, teaching methods and models for financing education.

Union of Education Norway works with teacher trade unions affiliated to Education International in Latin-America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Most of the programs are financially supported by Norad. The cooperation differs when it comes to methodology, but all programs have the goal of strengthening the unions (ourselves included) through organisational and education policy development. Items linked to EFA are high on the agenda.

In this context – Education for All - we would like to highlight a couple of programs that have also been of interest to Norwegian institutions:

1. A Research on the role of the World Bank on Fast Track Initiative programs in three countries in Latin-America
2. A three-partite cooperation in Zambia, South Africa and Norway, aiming at exchanging experiences and knowledge

about education surveys initiated by the countries own governments

There are especially **two networks** that are important to the Union of Education Norway in its work to promote higher education and teacher education among others:

1) Internationally the union is as already mentioned, affiliated to **Education International**, EI, the worlds largest Global Union Federation, and the only one representing education workers in every corner of the globe,

- counting 29 million members,
- in 348 member organizations
- operating in 166 countries.

The head-office of EI is in Brussels.

Regional offices you will find

- in Lomé, Togo for Africa,
- in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for Asia-Pacific
- in San José, Costa Rica for Latin America

Europe and Carribean have regional coordinators.

This widely spread organisational body makes it possible to keep in contact with colleagues worldwide on a daily basis.

EI is concerned about the status of teachers and their unions and in its training of the union leaders, it focuses on Quality Public Education For All. EI encourages their member organizations to develop union policies on education, and on EFA, and to train their members and leadership on education issues.

All teachers would like to have the feeling of handling their position professionally. To make this possible the conditions for their work must be at a minimum. Unfortunately that minimum is

very often not there, in fact there is a lack of qualified teachers and limited resources;

2) Nationally Union of Education Norway is one out of six NGOs that cooperate to promote EFA-goals in Norway mainly towards Norwegian authorities as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its department for development, and Norad:

The lobby network is part of a global one, established shortly before the Dakar conference in 2000: The name of the network is Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

Every year in April there is a week especially focusing on EFA. This year's slogan was: Every Child Needs A Teacher, which goes well with the Round Table seminar today. Probably not accidentally since the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on Teachers Status will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this year on the 5th October.

The Norwegian GCE-Network consists of the Union of Education Norway, Norwegian Union for School Employees (SL), Save the Children Norway, Norwegian Commission for UNESCO, UNICEF Norway, Elevorganisasjonen (the pupil organisation), The Norwegian Association for Adult Education (NAAE), PLAN Norway.

This year the Norwegian GCE-network has used its energy to introduce ourselves to the new left-wing government and to focus on the main issues of our policy:

- Education as a human right
- Learners/Students need of guidance from a competent teacher in their learning processes
- The need of quality and necessary length of teacher educations to reach the quality goal
- The responsibility of national authorities for Education for All and the rights of children.

- The claim that education must be free of charge, compulsory and public.
- The importance of teachers salaries and status in securing the quality of education
- The need of Norwegian development politics to emphasize the mentioned aspects and to focus on documentation of the learning outcomes.
- Norway's role internationally when it comes to pushing other rich nations and the World Bank to secure an economic policy that will not reduce poor countries possibilities to have a strong public sector

We think that progress is best made through working together, with dialogue and trust. But unfortunately there are weak traditions for dialogue with unions. The unions are often looked upon as bread-and-butter unions, and act accordingly, which means that the two-focus strategy is not well developed: Many unions lack a policy on education. But why have a policy if you are never consulted?